

MOUNT GRAHAM RED SQUIRREL
(*Tamiasciurus hudsonicus grahamensis*)

STATUS: Endangered (52 FR 20994; June 3, 1987) with critical habitat (55 FR 425, February 5, 1990).

SPECIES DESCRIPTION: Grayish-brown tree squirrel, tinged rusty or yellowish along the back. In summer, a dark lateral line separates the light-colored underparts from the grayer or browner sides. The ears are slightly tufted in the winter, and the tail is bushy. Its diet consists largely of conifer seeds.

HABITAT: Inhabits montane conifer forests from spruce-fir to mixed conifer types above 2,438 m (8,000 ft) in elevation. During the winter, this species depends on seed-bearing cones that it has stored at certain sites known as middens. These caches (or middens), usually associated with logs, snags, stumps, or a large living tree, are the focal points of individual territories. The number of middens is used to determine a rough estimate in the number of resident squirrels in an area.

RANGE: Historic: Pinaleno Mountains in Graham County, Arizona.

Current: Found primarily at higher elevations in the Pinaleno Mountains in spruce-fir and old growth Douglas-fir forests.

REASONS FOR DECLINE/VULNERABILITY: Endangered as a result of habitat destruction from logging, road construction, and other development, fluctuations in food availability, possibly competition from introduced tassel-eared squirrels and severe loss of major food resources (conifer cones) due to widespread, multiple-insect epidemics that affect several seral stages and species of conifer.

LAND MANAGEMENT/OWNERSHIP: U.S. Forest Service, Coronado National Forest.

NOTES: A Recovery Plan was completed in May 1993. A copy of the recovery plan is available online at

<http://arizonaes.fws.gov/Documents/RecoveryPlans/MtGrahamRedSquirrel.pdf>

Since 1999, mild winters and major irruptions of at least four insect species has significantly affected the spruce-fir forest on top of the Pinaleno Mountains. A new Recovery Team is being formed (2001) to address recovery of the squirrel.

Critical habitat is designated for the Mount Graham red squirrel in the following three areas of the Coronado National Forest, Graham County, Arizona: 1) Hawk Peak-Mount Graham Area, 2) Heliograph Peak Area, and 3) Webb Peak Area. The major constituent element is dense stands of mature spruce-fir forest.

The Mount Graham red squirrel is listed as a Species of Special Concern by the State of Arizona.